

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed on September 26, 2003, has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Prior to this paper, claims 1-9 and 12-17 were pending in the present application. By this paper, Applicants cancel claim 16 without prejudice or disclaimer and add no claims. Therefore, claims 1-9, 12-15 and 17 are now pending in the present application.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance for the reasons that follow.

Indication of Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank Examiner Lawrence for the indication that claim 16 contains allowable subject matter.

Reference Characters

Reference characters have been retained in the claims but have no effect on the claim scope per MPEP § 608.01(m).

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

In the Office Action, the only independent claim, claim 1, and dependent claims 2, 7-9, 12-15 and 17, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over EP 0764455 in view of "Applicants' Admitted Prior Art," with claims 3-6 being rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over EP 0764455 in view of "Applicants' Admitted Prior Art" and various additional references.

In response, Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the recitations of claim 16, a claim that is indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Claim 16 depends directly from claim 1. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is allowable, and that the claims that depend from claim 1 are likewise allowable.

Conclusion

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

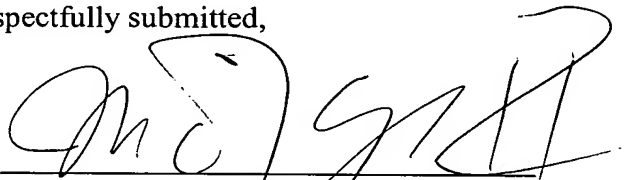
The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Examiner Lawrence is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

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Respectfully submitted,

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